

Details on the Communist Revolution

The Rise of Mao Zedong and the Communist Party

- Amidst the chaos in China in the 1920s, the Communist Party was formed. The Communist Party was a revolutionary group that planned to end social and economic inequality, especially for peasants, who represented 90 percent of the Chinese population. Mao Zedong, a founder of the Communist Party, believed “whoever wins the peasants will win China.” Millions of peasants starved in the 1920s and 1930s because of unequal land distribution and government policies that favored landlords. As communist rebels began to conquer territory, they won the support of peasants by collecting land from rich landlords and redistributing it to poor peasants.

Civil War in China

- By 1927 General Chiang Kai-shek had defeated most of the other warlords. He emerged as the leader of the Guomindang (the Nationalist Party) and established himself as the President and virtual dictator of China. But for more than two decades, Chiang Kai-shek fought a civil war for control of China against increasingly influential communist armies.
- In 1934 Chiang Kai-shek surrounded the small communist armies and attempted to defeat them. To escape the Guomindang armies, Mao Zedong, now in command of the Communist Party, led about 90,000 supporters over thousands of miles of mountains in what became known as the Long March. When they finally rested in northern China, only about 6,000 of the marchers had survived.

The Victory of the Communist Revolution in 1949

- Between 1937 and 1945 Chiang Kai-shek and Mao united their armies in an uneasy alliance to defeat a common enemy—the Japanese—who occupied China during that time. After the Japanese were defeated in World War II, however, the Guomindang and communist armies—known by then as the People’s Liberation Army (PLA)—continued the civil war.
- Though heavily outnumbered, the PLA used peasant support and guerrilla tactics to defeat the Guomindang troops and take military material. As the communists took over new areas of the countryside, they continued to confiscate (take) land from landlords and redistribute it among the peasants. Meanwhile, in the major cities, inflation and widespread corruption weakened the prestige of the Guomindang government.
- By early 1949 the People’s Liberation Army controlled much of the countryside, and thousands of Chiang’s troops began to defect (turn to the communist side). Within a few months, the PLA swept through China with little resistance, and Chiang Kai-shek fled to Taiwan. On October 1, 1949, amidst cheering crowds in the old imperial capital of Beijing, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. From this day on, most Chinese referred to the Communist Revolution as the “Liberation.”

Picture Representing the Communist Revolution



Here we see a poster of communist forces, led by Mao Zedong, entering Beijing in January 1949.